

**Indian Poetry Part – 3**  
**Professor Dr. Divya A**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**Length: 40:27**

Hello and welcome to the session on poetry in translation. Yesterday, if you remember we stopped with the reading of Dilip Chitre's 'Father Returning Home', so what we'll do today is go back to the poem and unpack in terms of literary analysis and we will come back to the regional element at the second half of this section.

So Dilip Chitre's 'Father Returning Home' has been translated by the poet himself. Now what I would like to do is ask a couple of questions in relation to this poem and see what the answers are. And I have a few tips for analyzing poetry with me, and I want to do this exercise. The first question is - try to figure out the meaning of the poem. What is the meaning of the poem? Sanchar, what do you think is the meaning?

Student 1: Basic sense I believe that it starts with something like painting a character sketch of a father. But more than that, it is basically a class character, like who is belonging from the more commonplace, a middle class man with his own frustrations, with his own hopes and hopelessness. So he is a man between the topsy and turvy, and everything, so he is going through life and he is almost at the fag-end of his life, so, from a distant camera perspective for, of his son's eyes we look at the father's character who comes back home.

Professor: Yeah.

Student 1: And it is so vivid, like the camera picture is so vivid that it seems like he is basically painting the pains and the joys of his father's character.

Professor: Yeah.

Student 1: So how he becomes connected to the society, how he is unable to connect with society, even that place where he is trying to merge himself in spite of his not liking the society around, so, how that old man has tried to cope up with the needs and necessities of life in order to carry on a future for himself as well as his family.

Professor: Right. Yeah.

Student 1: It is very deep in, in that, in the sense but the language is very easy, I feel, but there are some profound quotations like dropping out of a word from a sentence, or when he sits back, lays back himself and thinks about the estrangement of the modern world. So I think there are much profound things which are there inside this poem, so in that sense.

Professor: Okay. I think the first tip should have been - how do you summarize, what is the content, rather than meaning? Meaning is a deeper level.

Student 1: Yeah. Sure.

Professor: So I just realized that you know when you, when you first look at the poem, you just try to get what does it mean? Like, what is the summary? It is about a father who is returning home, that is it. The title kind of tells you that. A father is returning home, and that return is seen through the eyes of a son.

Student 1: Or a daughter.

Professor: Or daughter. You have suggested son, and yesterday then we were reading this poem, the instinctive response, in terms of my understanding of the speaker was of a female voice, of a daughter. It is a subconscious kind of conflation of, of what I think, you know, is the identity of the speaker. And, and I, the reasons, I was thinking as to why did I think it is a female? Because there is no indication whatsoever to suggest the gender of the speaker. So we have a speaker, looking at the father, who is returning home. What makes me think this is a female speaker is that, the estrangement. The estrangement between the father and the children which is referred to in this line, his 'sullen children' have often refused to share. His sullen children, unhappy children, the children who are sulking. And it is *my* father, the very first line says my father. So, so this speaker is part of the brood of that man.

And I thought, okay, alienation, sullenness, the distancing effect is usually on the part of the daughters, which is why I probably thought, but it could as well be a son. We have other examples in Indian poetry of, you know, sons being estranged from fathers. And the best example that I

could think of at this moment is AK Ramanujan's 'Obituary', right? So there we have a male voice, isn't it?

Who is kind of looking at his father and the kind of debts and other stuff that he has left behind for a son, the heir, to kind of sort out and look, and look after right? Especially daughters. And so, we do not know for certain whether it is a male or female child who is looking at the father figure, so I am still in with Sanchar's response to the poem.

The other thing is, we do not get a sense of joy on the part of the father. I don't personally see it. Maybe he kind of, maybe, I do not know where this, maybe this is a stretch, but maybe he kind of enjoys this sullenness himself in some way? Like, you know, he enjoys that, somebody could possibly enjoy the pessimism like the, the bleakness, the gloom, the mundaneness, you know, that, that kind of feel, feeling could be there, I do not know, but since he mentioned that, you know.

Student 1: Yes, we can interpret you know, multiple layers, so we can find that also.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, multiple layers. So, there is not a very explicit sense of joy, but there is a, perhaps an attitude which has become used to these kind of misery.

Student 1: Yeah, yeah.

Professor: That we kind of get at, get through this, you know, narrative. So, it is, if you were to summarize it, if, when you begin looking at a poem you just summarize it and see what the content is. So it is a, it is a father returning home. The second tip here for, for getting into this poem is think about the imagery. Imagery is a common technique used by poets to get their meaning across.

So what are the images in this poem, the mind pictures? Images are nothing but mind pictures. The mind pictures. Which images have been chosen? And are these images related, connected to one another? Is there one overall image or are there several different images used? What feeling is given by which image? Evaluate the poet's images. So let us go back to the poem and see what are the kind of mind pictures, images we get, and the first one, it is a very interesting image, is that of a sentence.

Student 2: Yeah.

Student 1: Yeah.

Professor: Okay, 'I can see him getting off the train like a word dropped from a long sentence'. So you immediately imagine a page with a lot of text or maybe one statement at least, and word being kind of dropped out of it, that being, that sense of being displaced. You know, forcibly dislocated in some way from the rest of the world. That back image comes to you when you read that phrase; like a word dropped from a long sentence.

Can you look at the poem and see what other images do you get? I mean, in fact the entire poem is a kind of a very, very powerfully imagistic rendering of man you know, travelling, getting off, you know, walking, crossing the railway line and getting into his house, drinking weak tea, it is, it is very powerful in that way, I mean the entire poem. But within that kind of sketch, you use the word sketch, within that what other, you know, word pictures or mind pictures do you get?

Student 2: In this poem, the poet wants to emphasize the fact that his father is very old. And instead of using a refrain, saying that, like when you look at other poems when they want to emphasize something, the common thing that they use is refrain, but here, to emphasize the fact that he is old, you find a lot of adjectives and images that are, that points out to his old age. So you have these words like evening tree, this yellow light, and then a grey platform.

Professor: Yeah.

Student 2: And even you hear he says about his graying hair and, and then this.

Professor: Yeah, good. Go on.

Student 2: And then this unseeing eye again, is like that.

Professor: Yeah, let me just go back to that one point both of you have raised which is that, the idea that this man is old. What makes you think that he is old? What are the indications or what is the mood in this poem, which tells you that he is most likely to be old? Can you pick on anything concrete in the poem?

Student 1: I think that this old, this old which is focused here in this entire poem, like, it may be a far stretched idea, but somewhere or the other we feel that this old is not only the old of age.

Professor: Yes.

Student 1: There is a predominating sense of a high exhaustion which is there and exhaustion is not only a biological exhaustion. This exhaustion is something which happens to a man when he goes on, on a regular habituated lifestyle and brings out, becomes, existence for him becomes mundane. And so I feel at this poem, when he is talking about stale chapatti, weak tea, these transferred epithets which are there.

So, the grey as she mentioned out, so this particular, the diction which he uses is also, since we are using images also, I think that this old, when he says that he comes back and there are grey hairs on his wrist when he is washing his hands. So, although we are biologically trying to track down that there is an old age man but something in the diction is saying that, there are a lot of more mundane elements that is pressing on him. So I think that is what it means to me.

Professor: Yeah, you are right. You are right. So, there are two things here, there are literal indications to suggest that he is, you know, aging. And the very tangible you know, backup, textual backup if you need one, is that greying.

Student 1: Yeah, exactly.

Professor: You know, the greying aspect, his greying wrist. So he is getting old. He is, if he is not kind of doddering, he is at least old, and he cannot be doddering because he is hurrying onwards. He is hurrying. He has the capacity to hurry, to rush, and since he is nearing home he rushes, he can physically move, when he is out of the train, he is in a hurry to get home. So that is one thing, so greying suggests some kind of, he is not in his prime, he is not in his prime.

Student 2: Definitely.

Professor: Definitely not in his prime. The other thing is the mood is created. I mean, that is another poem here. What is the mood of the poem, the tone? Mood is subjective, right? The feeling that you get from the text, so that is the mood which is created. The mood of the poem is somber, it is almost as if you know, the person is in his decline, if not physically, mentally. Mentally he is, he is definitely declined.

His unseeing eyes, I like that. The unseeing eyes, so it can suggest if you want to be too literate, it can suggest that perhaps his weak eyes, just as he is drinking weak tea. So unseeing eyes, the, the fact that he can no longer kind of physically take in all these details and process it, either because he is mentally fatigued, or because he is kind of physically in his decline.

So, the unseeing eyes is also an interesting detail which can you know, you go towards strengthening these two trajectories. The other one is, the one that you pointed out the yellowing light. The yellowing light is very interesting because yellow again suggests something which is not kind of, you know, bright and sparkling and excited, you know that, that kind of associated images do not come into that yellow melancholia. It is what is predominantly associated with that yellow color tone. What is the other one that you picked up? The graying hair on his wrist, and then the trembling, the idea of trembling at the sink, that tremble could be brought on by, you know, a mental fragility. Or it could be a physical, you know, debilitation?

Student 1: It naturally comes with age.

Professor: Yeah. So there are two things. Anything else Mridula? I want to pick up on further, in terms of the imagery and the, we see certain spaces, the space of the toilet, the space of the toilet, he goes into the toilet to contemplate man's estrangement from a man-made world. So, I mean, it is very, you know, it is spelt out for you.

Student 1: Yeah, exactly.

Professor: What his trouble is, the boy just tells you this is a trouble and we just wait, you know, he is feeling as if he is in a state of crisis. Mridula what do you think?

Student 2: Ma'am there is this idea of anxiety on the poet's part, the speaker's part, that his or her father is aging and I do not know why this reminds me of the poem of Kamala Das, 'My Mother at 60', where she looks at her mother and she feels very sad that she, her mother is aging. So here also you can see that Dilip Chitre is, or like the persona is worried that his or her mother is, father is aging and he just can't take it.

Professor: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, interesting. There are two, you know, characters if, if you want to put it that way. There are two characters. One is the character of the father. He is the object who

is being evaluated. Light being thrown on him, he is in the spotlight. But there is another character, the character of the child, you know, or, or the adult, you know, progeny of this man who is also there in the text.

So, both these characters are very well aware. They have very high, sophisticated way of looking at things. For example, this line that we just read, you know, he goes into the toilet to contemplate man's estrangement- look at the word is estrangement, it is a technical term. It is a term, it is an, it is what do you call it, it's a content word which kind of very sharply tells us about the alienation between this man and man-made around him, the society. So, this speaker is able to understand and apply all these terms very appropriately, isn't it? And, and, and the speaker is, is also very sharp enough to know what is going on in the mind of his father, especially the last line, he will now go to sleep; *will now*, not shall. No tentative, you know, attitude towards what the father is, you know, thinking about. 'He will now go to sleep, listening to the static on the radio, dreaming of his ancestors and grandchildren, thinking of nomads and entering a sub-continent through a narrow pass.'

So, the speaker is able to get into the mind of the father and see the thoughts that are running through. So both these characters are highly literate and very sophisticated in their philosophical, you know, understanding of their place in society. So the connection with couple others is, is pretty interesting, maybe we can bring that poem and put it as, into kind of an additional read for the students to kind of make comparisons, you can also bring 'Obituary' as you know, other supporting text that you can kind of read in relation to this one.

But, what do you think about the static on the radio? I mean, it is a very, you know, auditory image, static. That sound you can hear that static, that noise when you, when you read that line. What would you make of that image?

Student 2: It just means that he is not really listening to the radio or, it is, it is like this unseeing eyes. He is listening, but not listening really. It talks about how, how much estranged he feels from the society or like, he does not really feel connected with anything, or just he is not bothered about what is happening.

Professor: Either. Yeah. Either it is a real static, there is literal noise or it is a metaphoric figurative static. He is listening to the static, there are two ways we can interpret it- literally it is some noise, perhaps the radio is not working. Again which, it ties in with all the other idea of broken images, like you know, the bleak images, it can tie into that kind of, you know, string of thought. Or it is, it is a figurative static, he is no, as you said, he is not able to listen anymore, really listen. It is like those unseeing eyes, you can connect it to that. So all his senses are failing in some ways, only his thoughts seem to be very, very sharp and the way he can fantasize, imagine about the past and the future, his ancestors and the grandchildren, he is able to kind of foresee you know, you know the future that is going to happen.

And the last line of 'nomads entering a sub-continent through a narrow pass,' it is a very interesting image. A narrow pass, trying to get in, and nomadic people. What, what thoughts have you on that? Because there is, there is a tip, let me, sorry to interrupt you. There is a, there is a tip which asks us to, focus on the last lines. Where is that?

Student 1: Nomads entering the sub-continent.

Professor: It says, the last line, pay attention to the last line of the poem because the last line can either reveal what the poem is really about or it can kind of take the poem in a different direction.

Student 1: Exactly.

Professor: It can take you away. So what, what does this last line do? Does it kind of give out the meaning in a more metaphoric way? Does it kind of recap, summarize the meaning in a metaphoric way? Or is it kind of trying to take you into an alternative route? What exactly is this this last line doing, the last image doing? It is a very powerful image. It is a very, very beautiful image of nomads entering a sub-continent through a narrow pass.

Student 1: It is actually arguable. Because like when we were reading this poem back so we wanted to see that since the last three lines are a little bit different from others like, it does not really connect with the preceding lines, I mean. The thought process will not be able to be related. So we were trying to look at the history of Dilip Chitre, like, if he has an experience of migrating from someplace to the other, and we found that it was not a really large scale migration, he came from his native place from Vadodara to Mumbai.



So we were like, and it was something in his childhood days which kind of, what can I say, like, influenced him a lot in his way of adapting to a new place and everything. So I felt that maybe somewhere since he is talking about an old father, and if I consider the fact that the old father has come to a city in order to sustain his life and, and the generations after him. So he has migrated from a faraway place. And of course, with migration and dislocation, as you mentioned, so there is a lot of nostalgia and things which you get discontent from a whole grass root level thing. So, generally there will be a crisis of identity like where I am, and where I was and where I am. So if we try to connect that thing, then maybe because of the historical route that he is going from Vadodara to Mumbai, there only. I think that there can be a little bit of connection to the idea that there is some migrant experience which is also there.

Professor: Yes, there is a definite suggestion of this idea of migration. Very beautifully put- you are trying to kind of connect it to the biographical you know, narrative of Dilip Chitre, the poet. Yeah, it, it makes a lot of sense. It is a beautiful, effective context. And I was also trying to think about the other text and the other Marathi text that derived from the core, 'Gold from the Grave', there is an idea of migration there too, isn't there? The central character Bhima, he comes from a village to the city to make, to make it big, or at least, you know, survive by dint of his hard work. And it, this is another poem, you know, translated by the speaker himself, I mean, the poet himself, Dilip Chitre and that is also in Marathi text, so the idea of migration is, is part of that kind of region, I believe. And that is kind of brought to the surface through these kind of, you know, textual images and narratives. There it is very explicitly stated in that story 'Gold from the Grave', he comes from a village to kind of make a living in the city and it does not work out and he is in suburbs, ust you know. And this guy is also a kind of perhaps a nomad, the father is perhaps a nomad and perhaps he feels alienated because of that migrant experience, perhaps he has more connections, more roots just as Toba Tek Singh has with his village.

And so perhaps that could be one of the reasons behind that alienation. And this is suburbia, life is fast. And that is kind of indicated through the train, that, and then all, everybody is silent. Suburbs slide past his unseeing eyes and the line before that, silent commuters, there is no kind of connection among the people who are traveling together on the same train. You know, people usually, they crowded on trains but there is hardly any conversation. No connection, no bonds. However minimal that is, even a minimal conversation. I mean, it is not unique to the suburban

trains in India. Even in you know, places like London or Singapore where the tube or the metro is very-very, you know, common for a large mass of the population, there is hardly any conversation. Everybody would have a book, or a newspaper, somebody would be writing, they would be holding the rail on by the one hand, holding a book on the other hand, there will be silence, utter silence.

Student 1: And this is something, same thing why I feel that this poem is very stark in presenting what exactly a cityscape is.

Professor: Yes.

Student 1: So if I take the character of a, of a person who is coming from a village to, or a rural area to sustain himself and establish himself in a city, so maybe he will do that financially. But the bigger question mark lies, whether he will be ready to accept or internalize the exact culture where he is coming (to).

Professor: Yeah.

Student 1: And in the later part of the future, that turns out to an estrangement because there will be an alienation and isolation from what he used to be. So there is a big pressure, not pressure, like he is getting a hint from what he used to believe in and what he is today. So this is a very, this is a very interesting poem which charts an evolution of a person. So if we, if we take that into consideration, like the conclusion about the migrant experience, then this poem will become a longer poem in course of time. So, which he has kind of long concretized in a small, what can I say like a small area and he has limited concretised.

Professor: Yeah, so the alienation that the city produces, the city kind of creates that kind of structural alienation between individuals, I think, you know, we have a very lovely poem by Ezekiel as well, 'Mumbai', which you can pick up on and use as kind of extra reading, where same kind of alienation is felt through by the, by the people moving about on city. So I think that can also be an interesting comparison.

The other thing I was wondering was the point that you raised about the lack of connectivity, I mean, the sense of alienation. It is also interesting to see I mean, if we go back Marathi short story, I mean, we see Bhima most of the time on his own, you know, with his thoughts. He, he, his mind-

voice is kind of to put it very simplistically is coming through and more apparent, it is on the surface. And most of the time he is with his thoughts read, right?

There is no kind of connection going from him to the rest of the village community, to the other kind of people in the society. He seems to be all by himself, of course he has his child and wife, as the foremost dependents on his mind, but there is no other community that he can forge with anybody. So it is a very isolating kind of feeling that you can get in the story, don't you think?

It is a, and, and the utmost that he interacts in an ironic way is that brutal fight with this pack of hyenas. And, and he can see all these villagers and other people as close. So there is no kind of proper bond, a real genuine bond of exchange happening between the central character and the rest of us. And similarly here with, with Dilip Chitre and in that alienation has even seeped into the family.

Student 2: Yes.

Professor: Even the children cannot relate to the father. The father cannot relate to the children. He worries about, I mean he thinks about his ancestors and the grandchildren, but there is no kind of genuine, real bond of affection coming through that you can pick upon. We pick up on bleakness, we pick up on the idea of decline, we pick up on estrangement, alienation, but we do pick up on, you know, happy human emotions from this poem.

And the thing is there is no, I mean, apparently there is no reference to the, the central female character, the mother figure. I mean, the child is so focused on the father that there is no thought about the mother, which kind of lends more credence to what Sanchar kind of, you know, thinks could be the gender of the speaker. So it is probably a son who feels more worried about or connected to the male figure, rather than my kind of, you know, idea that it could be a female, a well-informed female. But, but you know, so it is a very interesting, interesting absence. The mother's absence is very interesting.

Student 2: Yes.

Professor: There is a little bit of reference in 'Obituary' to the mother, you know who is doing all these yearly rituals, very unreferenced there. And so the absence of the female from this kind of,

you know, suburban landscape, and even when, when we see that weak tea, I see him drinking the weak tea, who prepares the tea? How does the tea come into his hand? Who brings it, is it the child or is it the mother? And there is a reference to chapatti.

Student 2: It is stale.

Professor: It is, it is italicized. And who, who makes that chapatti? Why is it stale? What does it tell you about the domestic economy? Do they have to economize? What are the pressures? The financial pressures on the family? So all, that was very, very interesting that adjective 'stale', and you can also kind of, you know, get the idea of smelling that staleness.

Student 1: Yeah. Actually there is some.

Professor: So it is a very sensible image, its staleness and weak tea, the lukewarm tea. Or maybe there is, there is more of water than of milk in that tea. Once again making you think about the economy of that family. So who brings that tea, who makes that stale chapatti? So that she is perhaps indirectly present, but you know, very very absent and that makes you wonder further and makes you think about Salma, right? Salma's 'Perspective'. There we see her in the midst of her domestic chores. Can we quickly look at that poem? We have been talking about it so much though. Can it grab yours? Yeah. So, cooking is kind of this, the second activity after combing in the, in the order of things. 'I stand upside and comb my hair, I cook topsy-turvy, and eat thus too, I squat inverted to feed my child, heels upward I read my books. Upside down I gaze at myself terrified, stunned and staring at me, a bat hanging right on the tree in the garden.' So cooking is kind of spelt out as the second most important thing after, you know, looking after your appearance for a woman. So it is very interesting the things that are mentioned and the order in which they are mentioned. And in, in this poem too, we see that last set of lines, last set of words is an image, just as in Dilip Chitre.

So there is a, there is a parallel there between 'Father Returning Home' and Salma's 'Perspective' in terms of the final imagery. The use of imagery to conclude the poems. There we have a, a bat and here we have a nomad, or, or a bunch of nomads entering a subcontinent through a pass. So the nomads, again, as we discussed signifies migrant experience and usually led by new leaders in search of fresh pastures. So moving here and there for survival and the pitfalls of that kind of

migrant experience is kind of given very specifically through this suburbia that we see in 'Father Returning Home'.

So, I think, I think we can think about other poems as well in terms of Dilip Chitre. What are the other poems that you can think of as parallels? Or as stark contrast to this one?

Student 1: Parallels in the sense, 'Perspective' by Salma, I think that if we can take that poem like, 'Father Returning Home' as a character portrait of a father, we can also take perspective as a character portrait of a mother. And like, if we basically look at the gender perspective most importantly, in spite of having the last three lines which are parallel, I also find that this particular image is like in 'Perspective' when she says this opposite, she uses opposite phases, phrases like 'topsy-turvy', 'upside down', then 'inverted', all these kinds of things. In spite of everything, this poem also has a kind of a crisis.

Professor: Yeah.

Student 1: Like, I believe like there is a kind of a pathos somewhere there where the mother is, only difference is that yeah, the mother is the female gender. She is basically, I mean, putting forward her own experience, while in the other poem there is a second character who is doing that. So I think that in that sense both can be kind of companion pieces where it looks at the existential crisis, regular lifestyle of two persons in their, what can I say, like in normality and something which is very difficult for them to experience. Like the reality of life for each of them in each of their own places.

Professor: Yes, absolutely.

Student 1: So in that sense, we will have both these poems can stand as, like, how exactly life is for both these, both two genders in that sense. With their own crisis, with their own topsy-turvy lifestyle and everything so. And both are kind of going through the experience and carrying on their survival. So I think both of them are pretty much profound in that sense.

Professor: Yeah. Yesterday Mridula when we were talking about Kedarnath Singh's 'Where Would I Go' and we were, we were, Mridula was pointing out that you know, that poem seems to tell that the you know, the person you know, the character in the poem seems to be okay with the

world, you know, there is a, there is a kind of being at comfort and, and we thought about 'Perspective' and realized that she is not okay with the world.

She is never comfortable and she is super aware of her position. And her position, she can only describe through this idea of figurative topsy-turvy ness like, you know, the idea of being inverted. So, I think that is a powerful image more powerful than the narrative that we see in Dilip Chitre. And Dilip Chitre, it is a narrative. It is almost as if there is a story. That is one of the tips that asks you to see if the poem has a storyline.

How does it kind of begin, what is the middle poem? How does it end and you, what is their function of, what is the function of characters and so on? So if you look at this one, there, there is a narrative, I mean, it is, it is very episodic, like she mentions the things that she does standing, cooking, feeding, reading. Standing, cooking, feeding, reading, and yet it is all very, very upside down. Like she is very aware of the fact that she is not in a normal position. But here, there is a sense of normalcy.

And you know, yes, the father is alienated; yes, the son can see that, or the daughter can see that, that the father is having some type of crisis. Despite that, it, it is a routine the father is able to move through all these faces of the city. He, he is able to kind of leave traces, we were talking about traces. He is able to leave traces. He, he has possessions, he has chapattis, he has chappals. He has a bag, which is bursting with books. But even when she reads the books Salma's speaker, when she reads the book, she feels as if she is doing it upside down. And Sanchar, I totally agree with what you are saying. I mean, this is very gendered, you know, the male and the female world. One is a normal world, the other is a topsy-turvy world. Mridula what else can you see as being very distinctive in, in relation to these poems?

Student 2: Mam when you said that, in this 'Father Returning Home', you said that here in the book, the persona, feels that he is attached to this world he, he has a mark in this world. In the same way you can see that in this poem 'Where would I Go', also he leaves, you know, he has a mark like, he has a something, he has a possession and but when it comes to this 'Perspective', although she is part of that world she feels alienated because she does not have any say. And she is sad about it. But in these two poems, 'Where would I Go', he is, he is part and parcel of the society and community. And he is okay about it, but she is not. Here in this poem, you can see a

very conflicting imagery, because he does not know whether he should be, because it is not written in the perspective of the, I mean, it is to the, it is written through the eyes of the narrator, we don't know what the father is exactly feeling. But in the other two poems you understand what is exactly happening with them.

Professor: Yes, very good point.

Student 1: Very subjective, it is subjective.

Professor: Yeah, it is, it is a very important structural point Mridula. I mean, we kind of look at the father through the eyes of the progeny, the child, the descendant, but as you pointed we really literally do not know what exactly the father was, you know, going through. The son, perhaps rightly assumes all these, you know, philosophical attitudes.

But in Salma's case the speaker is very assertive. She is a victim, she thinks that she is not allowed to be in a normal position. She is aware of the fact that she is in a topsy-turvy position, but she is also very assertive. I read, look at the statements like, 'I stand, I cook, I squat'. There is, there is a, there is a kind of, in terms of the tone there is an assertiveness. There is a, there is a forthrightness, like it is very forthright, I know, it is forthrightness is the right way to put it. There is an idea of being very forthright and assertive, the, the tone is slightly aggressive, maybe you know, and there is the, look of the choice of the words, 'terrified, stunned, staring at me'. There is, there is an element of rebellion, maybe.

Student 2: Yes.

Professor: The staring at me, and acknowledging that stare from the bat. The bat perhaps is terrified, the bat perhaps is stunned. The bat perhaps as like, always staring at me hanging ripe on the tree in the garden, like that contradictory kind of images coming through. So you are right in pointing out the structural difference between these two poems. And as, as Sanchar pointed out is the domestic world that we see. And I also thought that we get a sense of being confined in Salma. She is within doors, perhaps able to see the gardens. That is as far as the eyes can go. But here in Dilip Chitra, 'Father Returning Home', we can see the father navigating.

Student 1: Through the city.

Professor: Yeah, the suburban space. Of course he is alienated, he is able to not see things, but at least he is out there in the open like the birds that fly and come back. And like the spirit of Kedarnath's speaker in 'Where Would I Go', who is allowed to fly and like the birds come back. She is not. She is, she is like that bat.

Student 1: Confined in the space.

Professor: Like hanging in the garden there, frozen in that particular moment and tied to the domestic world and but she is trying to kind of get at the real world through the books that she reads. So, the books are the kind of gateways into outside worlds, into multiple worlds, which, which kind of gives us some vistas out to the public sphere. So, this is, this is how we can connect all these poems that we study for this course.

And wherever possible I want you to think about the regional flavors. So the idea of migrancy itself could be connected more overtly to that particular domain, we need to do further research to kind of pin point and say, yes, the migrant experience is greater in this region of India and lesser elsewhere so that, that could be a regional flavor. Chapatti, the choice of that kind of food on a regular basis is very peculiar to that region.

Student 2: Yeah.

Professor: And chappals, I think we use that, very common. It is an Indianism I think, rather than belonging to a particular region. So there is a conflation of Indianisms like you know, and as well as regional flavors that you can get here and there in these poetry. Anything further? I think we have to do more research, we will come back as we look at other texts for this course. Thank you for your valuable thoughts. Thank you.